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ART. IV.—*Poems*. By EDWARD C. PINKNEY. Baltimore. Joseph Robinson. 1825. 12mo. pp. 76.

OF the last piece but one in this volume, entitled *Rodolph*, we have heretofore given a short notice. It was first published separately and anonymously ; but is now accompanied by several shorter poems, and by the author's name, which there is certainly no reason for concealing. With all its faults, *Rodolph* abounds with beauties, which any of our poets might be glad to claim. The promise, which it held forth on its first appearance, that there was more gold in the same mine, has not been broken. Some of the small pieces in this very small volume are really exquisite. At least they appear so to us ; and we are quite willing to submit our opinion to the judgment of our readers, by making two or three extracts for their perusal.

Let us take '*Italy*,' which stands first in the book, as one of our specimens. It is an imitation of Goethe's celebrated *Kennst du das Land*. To imitate excellence successfully, one must be something more than a mere imitator. Dulness, or mediocrity, can do nothing but repeat with servility the ideas of its model, 'and regularly weaken all it repeats.' Genius catches the thought and spirit of kindred genius, and gives them a fair and well proportioned body of its own. In short, when what is borrowed is good, what is altered or added must be good too, or we shall perceive the vast disparity, and be displeased at it, and be moved to tell the imitator that he had no business with such beautiful things, if he knew not how to make a better use of them. We think our readers, however, will feel no disposition to say so to the author of the following lines.

Know'st thou the land which lovers ought to choose ?  
Like blessings there descend the sparkling dews ;  
In gleaming streams the crystal rivers run,  
The purple vintage clusters in the sun ;  
Odors of flowers haunt the balmy breeze,  
Rich fruits hang high upon the verdant trees ;  
And vivid blossoms gem the shady groves,  
Where bright plum'd birds discourse their careless loves.  
Beloved !—speed we from this sullen strand  
Until thy light feet press that green shore's yellow sand.

Look seaward thence, and nought shall meet thine eye  
But fairy isles like paintings on the sky ;  
And, flying fast and free before the gale,  
The gaudy vessel with its glancing sail ;  
And waters glittering in the glare of noon,  
Or touched with silver by the stars and moon,  
Or flecked with broken lines of crimson light  
When the far fisher's fire affronts the night.  
Lovely as loved ! towards that smiling shore  
Bear we our household gods, to fix for evermore.

It looks a dimple on the face of earth,  
The seal of beauty, and the shrine of mirth ;  
Nature is delicate and graceful there,  
The place's genius, feminine and fair ;  
The winds are awed, nor dare to breathe aloud ;  
The air seems never to have borne a cloud,  
Save where volcanoes send to heav'n their curled  
And solemn smokes, like altars of the world.  
Thrice beautiful !—to that delightful spot  
Carry our married hearts, and be all pain forgot.

There Art too shows, when Nature's beauty palls,  
Her sculptured marbles, and her pictured walls ;  
And there are forms in which they both conspire  
To whisper themes that know not how to tire ;  
The speaking ruins in that gentle clime  
Have but been hallowed by the hand of Time,  
And each can mutely prompt some thought of flame—  
The meanest stone is not without a name.  
Then come, beloved !—hasten o'er the sea  
To build our happy hearth in blooming Italy.

Are not the two lines, beginning ' Save where volcanoes,' sufficient to give a more than ordinary character to this piece ? Are they not poetry, and grand poetry ? The similitude contained in them is one, which the memory cannot refuse to keep and cherish, because it is rich in those sublime associations which the memory loves, and loves to hoard among its treasures. And it is one of the peculiarities of the volume before us, that it is replete with comparisons of a highly poetical nature. We have an instance in the second piece, called 'The Indian Bride.'

Their sun declines not in the sky,  
Nor are their wishes cast,  
Like shadows of the afternoon,  
Repining toward the past.

No less than three of these figures are contained in the two last verses of the 'Picture Song.'

The sportive hopes, that used to chase their shifting shadows on,  
Like children playing in the sun, are gone—forever gone ;  
And on a careless, sullen peace, my double-fronted mind,  
Like Janus when his gates were shut, looks forward and behind.

Apollo placed his harp, of old, awhile upon a stone,  
Which has resounded since, when struck, a breaking harp string's  
tone ;  
And thus my heart, though wholly now from early softness free,  
If touched, will yield the music yet, it first received of thee.

There is much richness in the following evening scene.  
Enough has already been said about the loves of the angels,  
but we will pardon those four lines, for the sake of the rest.

'Twas eve ; the broadly shining sun  
Its long, celestial course had run ;  
The twilight heaven, so soft and blue,  
Met earth in tender interview,  
Ev'n as the angel met of yore  
His gifted mortal paramour,  
Woman, a child of morning then,—  
A spirit still,—compared with men.  
Like happy islands of the sky,  
The gleaming clouds reposed on high,  
Each fixed sublime, deprived of motion,  
A Delos to the airy ocean.  
Upon the stirless shore no breeze  
Shook the green drapery of the trees,  
Or, rebel to tranquillity,  
Awoke a ripple on the sea.  
Nor, in a more tumultuous sound,  
Were the world's audible breathings drowned ;  
The low strange hum of herbage growing,  
The voice of hidden waters flowing,  
Made songs of nature, which the ear  
Could scarcely be pronounced to hear ;

But noise had furled its subtle wings,  
And moved not through material things,  
All which lay calm as they had been  
Parts of the painter's mimic scene.

And now we will pass to an effusion, which is in the true antique spirit of gallantry and hyperbole. If the name of Harrington or Carew had been subscribed to it, we should, in all probability, like other antiquaries, have been completely taken in.

SERENADE.

Look out upon the stars, my love,  
And shame them with thine eyes,  
On which, than on the lights above,  
There hang more destinies.  
Night's beauty is the harmony  
Of blending shades and light ;  
Then, Lady, up,—look out, and be  
A sister to the night !—

Sleep not !—thine image wakes for aye,  
Within my watching breast ;  
Sleep not !—from her soft sleep should fly,  
Who robs all hearts of rest.  
Nay, Lady, from thy slumbers break,  
And make this darkness gay,  
With looks, whose brightness well might make  
Of darker nights a day.

Our next specimen is in a much higher strain. If he who reads it is a lover already, it will make him love the more, and if he is not, he will determine to become one forthwith. There is a devotion and delicacy about it, an ardent and at the same time respectful and spiritual passion breathed out in it, which must insure for it a ready admiration.

A HEALTH.

I fill this cup to one made up of loveliness alone,  
A woman, of her gentle sex the seeming paragon ;  
To whom the better elements and kindly stars have given,  
A form so fair, that, like the air, 'tis less of earth than heaven.  
Her every tone is music's own, like those of morning birds,  
And something more than melody dwells ever in her words :

The coinage of her heart are they, and from her lips each flows  
As one may see the burthened bee forth issue from the rose.

Affections are as thoughts to her, the measures of her hours ;  
Her feelings have the fragrancy, the freshness of young flowers ;  
And lovely passions, changing oft, so fill her, she appears  
The image of themselves by turns,—the idol of past years !

Of her bright face one glance will trace a picture on the brain,  
And of her voice in echoing hearts a sound must long remain ;  
But memory such as mine of her so very much endears,  
When death is nigh, my latest sigh will not be life's but hers.

I filled this cup to one made up of loveliness alone,  
A woman, of her gentle sex the seeming paragon—  
Her health ! and would on earth there stood some more of such a  
frame,  
That life might be all poetry, and weariness a name.

We will now pass on to a more particular consideration,  
than we before gave, of *Rodolph*, which is the only poem of  
much length in the volume. It is divided into two parts.  
The first begins in a fine style.

The Summer's heir on land and sea  
Had thrown his parting glance,  
And Winter taken angrily  
His waste inheritance.  
The winds in stormy revelry  
Sported beneath a frowning sky ;  
The chafing waves with hollow roar  
Tumbled upon the shaken shore,  
And sent their spray in upward showers  
To *Rodolph's* proud ancestral towers,  
Whose station from its mural crown  
A regal look cast sternly down.

For the story, we cannot pretend the least affection. This  
*Rodolph* arrives, at the season so poetically described above,  
and after a long absence, at his own domain. He is a  
changed man, 'grown old in heart, infirm of frame ;' and the  
causes of this change are stated. He had loved, and loved  
successfully, the wife of another. The husband comes upon  
them 'at an untimely tide,' and is slain. The lady retires to  
a convent, and there dies. *Rodolph*, in despair and bitter-  
ness of heart, wanders into distant climes. Here the first  
part leaves him. The second opens thus ;

How feels the guiltless dreamer, who  
 With idly curious gaze  
 Has let his mind's glance wander through  
 The relics of past days?—  
 As feels the pilgrim that has scanned,  
 Within their skirting wall,  
 The moon-lit marbles of some grand  
 Disburied capital;  
 Masses of whiteness and of gloom,  
 The darkly bright remains  
 Of desolate palace, empty tomb,  
 And desecrated fanes;—  
 For in the ruins of old hours,  
 Remembrance haply sees  
 Temples, and tombs, and palaces,  
 Not different from these.

But these 'mere musings,' we are told, are not for Rodolph to indulge, who is now at home. He feels some sad and disturbing presentiment; backs his steed, and takes his way to a cemetery. He does not return, and in the morning his vassals find him in a senseless state, 'beside his lady's urn.' A raging fever attacks him, and in its delirium he raves of many crimes, which he had committed abroad, but dwells particularly on 'one dark deed.'

He spoke of one too dearly loved,  
 And one unwisely slain,  
 Of an affection hardly proved  
 By murder done in vain.

Pretty soft terms, we think, to apply to adultery and murder. He basely and incurably wrongs a man, murders him, and then reproaches himself for having done an *unwise thing*—and chiefly, because he had done it in vain.

Some of his ravings are recorded. They commence with the following original figure.

The evil hour in which you traced  
 Your name upon my heart, is passed,  
 And hidden fires or lightning-flashes  
 Have since reduced it into ashes;  
 Yet oft will busy thought unrol  
 That fragile, scorched, and blackened scroll,  
 And shrink to find the spell, your name,  
 A legend uneffaced by flame.

All will agree that this is what we have called it, original, highly so; in our opinion, it is also, notwithstanding its boldness, in thus bringing into poetry the mechanical operation of unrolling Herculean manuscripts, beautiful. The figure is remarkably well sustained throughout. But to return to Rodolph; he dies in his madness, and the poem closes abruptly and coldly.

In this piece are displayed most of the predominant faults of the writer; for he has faults, and it is our duty to point them out with the same candor and sincerity, with which we have praised his excellencies. He is often obscure. This is in many cases the consequence of his compressing a great deal of meaning in a single line, or hinting a remote allusion, which obliges the reader to stop and ponder; who in such cases will be rewarded for his trouble. But in others there is obscurity without cause, and involving no important meaning, and then it is a mere stumbling block. As a general rule, it is no doubt better that a reader should be induced to stop from admiration of an apparent and palpable beauty, than be obliged to stop to investigate the signification of what he has read, let it turn out beautiful or otherwise.

Our author is fond of classical allusions and comparisons, and is not fond of explaining them, though they are often drawn from the least known events of ancient history or mythology. If the reader, therefore, is not pretty thoroughly versed in this kind of lore, he is constantly obliged to resort to a Lempriere, if he has one, when a short note would have answered the purpose in a much more convenient, and we doubt not, pleasant way.

It is easy to see, that Mr Pinkney is well acquainted with the best old English poetry, and perhaps he suffers his own to be tinged somewhat too deeply by some peculiarities of its phraseology. In the 'Widow's Song,' for instance, which is a sweet composition, we have for the last line, 'And *falls* these heavy tears.' To many this use of the verb in an active sense will appear unwarranted and unwarrantable. But there is Shakspearian authority for it.

If that the earth could teem with woman's tears,  
Each drop she *falls* would prove a crocodile.

The word is also thus used in Dryden's prose. As another



instance, we may notice, that he gives to the verb *arrive*, without a preposition, the active sense of *to reach*. Thus in Rodolph he says,

At such a season, his domain  
The lord at last *arrived* again.

The reader would not here be resolved of his doubts, as in the former instance, by resorting to Johnson's large dictionary, for Johnson gives no such use of the word. In the second book of *Paradise Lost*, however, he will find Beelzebub inquiring of the assembled demons, which of them will

Spread his airy flight,  
Upborne with indefatigable wings  
Over the vast abrupt, ere he *arrive*  
The happy isle ?

There is an instance to the same purpose also, in the third part of Shakspeare's *Henry Sixth*. Notwithstanding these authorities, it still is a question of criticism and taste, whether a writer of the present day is justifiable in such obsolete usages. We are inclined to think that he is not.

These are small objections. But we have more serious faults to find. We do not like the moral tone of this poetry. It is too close and too loud an echo to that of Byron. There is that abstracted and selfish gloom and moodiness about it, that solitary want of kindly human sympathies, that stiff and hard casing of pride, that sullen dissatisfaction with the present state, and that reckless doubt or disbelief of a future one, which seem to have been caught from Byron, and of which we have already had too much in Byron. We are sorry to be obliged to speak in this manner of poetry, and American poetry, in which there is so much that is elevated and captivating. But if there is anything valuable in character, in life, in the world, it is a firm principle and habit of virtue, benevolence and piety ; and we can never afford our entire approbation to any production, which shows an indifference to these.

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